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Thundersnow possible with record-challenging winter storm this weekend in Rockies. Get the forecast.

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"It was breathtaking! In between shooting photographs, we always steal a few seconds for ourselves and take some deep breaths out there, allowing the scene to wash over us in all its ephemeral beauty," Elliot McGucken told AccuWeather over the phone.

McGucken is a professional photographer who was in Death Valley the day after the flooding rain and documented the rare phenomenon.



(Photo/Elliot McGucken) < 1/16 >

(Photo/Elliot McGucken)

McGucken was in the right place at the right time to photograph the temporary desert oasis, but this was no accident. The Los Angeles-based photographer was planning to be in the park when heavy rain was in the forecast.

"I kept planning and canceling [trips to Death Valley], but I know that as time goes on you get less and less chance for rain as you get into summer, so I figured

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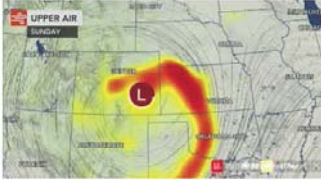
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"I kept planning and canceling [trips to Death Valley], but I know that as time goes on you get less and less chance for rain as you get into summer, so I figured I better go now, so I did. I was really lucky," McGucken told AccuWeather.

"I was just hoping to see some water down in Badwater Basin. It was in a totally different place than what I was [originally] thinking," McGucken said.

On Wednesday, March 6, Death Valley measured 0.87 of an inch of rain. While this may not sound significant, this total accounts for more than 30 percent of the park's average yearly rainfall of 2.36 inches.

Since the ground in Death Valley is hard-packed, the water isn't absorbed into the ground too easily, so floodwater just settle on the valley floor and sit there until it evaporates. Sometimes this process can take days.

Some roads in the park were also closed after flooding left behind sediment and debris across roadways.

McGucken said that the lake was only around 6 inches deep in the spots he ventured out to, but he estimates that it could have been several feet deep in some areas.

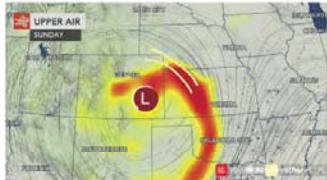
"There isn't really an official name for it, and the size all depends on how much rain we got and how long it has been since that rain," Death Valley Park Ranger Patrick Taylor said.

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This phenomenon does not happen often, and not many people were in the park

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This phenomenon does not happen often, and not many people were in the park to see the short-lived lake firsthand.

"It was kind of weird that I was the only one there. Part of it might have been because it was kind of far from the road, so it might have been too far away for people to bother. It was also a Thursday in March, so there's not many winter vacationers there," McGucken said.

"You go to places like Yosemite, you're at the big scene during winter storms and you're definitely not alone there; there are tons of people. But this was every bit as significant, so it's kind of strange when you're standing all alone and you're thinking 'Am I doing this right?' There are points that you're standing still and you're sinking in the mud and you're asking yourself 'Is there a reason why people aren't out here?'"


Death Valley is also usually windy during the day, but the winds diminished and remained calm long enough for the lake to look like a sheet of glass, allowing McGucken to capture incredible reflections of the mountains in the distance.



(Photo: Blair McGucken)

There are accounts of this lake forming following heavy rain in the past. One of the most prominent occurrences was in October 2015 when several rainstorms hit the park. In the span of two weeks, the park measured 1.3 inches of rain, nearly 2,000 percent above the normal rainfall in October.

The flooding that month also caused major road damage across the park with some roads still in the process of being repaired to this day.



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The lake has since dissipated and may not reappear until next winter, or potentially longer. California had an unusually wet winter, with a parade of rain and snowstorms in higher elevations dumping enough precipitation on the Golden State to officially lift it out of a drought for the first time in eight years, [scientists announced this week](#).

Questions or comments? Email Brian Lada at Brian.Lada@accuweather.com and be sure to follow him on Twitter!

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Found: A Lake in Death Valley, the Hottest and Driest of the U.S. National Parks


It was not a mirage.


BY JONATHAN CAREY • MARCH 15, 2019

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DESTINATION GUIDE
California








The mountains of Death Valley stare at their own reflection. ELLIOT MCGUCKEN/45EPIC FINE ART LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, WHICH sprawls across the border of Nevada and California, is well known for its superlatives: It is the hottest, driest, and lowest of the U.S. national parks. So in early March 2019, when a lake suddenly appeared there, people were amazed and perplexed. How did this happen?

Well, it was definitely not a mirage. The estimated 10-mile-long

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Found: A Lake in Death Valley, the Hottest and Driest of the U.S. National Parks


Well, it was definitely not a mirage. The estimated 10-mile-long ephemeral lake was the result of heavy rainstorms in the area. As first reported by *SFGate*, between March 5 and 6, Death Valley received 0.84 inches of rain. The average rainfall for the entire year is around two inches. The dry climate has created soil that can only absorb water at a very slow rate. Those two factors—the unusual volume of the rain and the extreme dryness of the soil—are what allowed the lake to form.

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The lake was an estimated 10 miles long. ELLIOT MCGUCKEN/45EPIC FINE ART LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

This wasn't the first time this has happened, but typically, these bodies of water are merely very shallow ponds. Patrick Taylor, the chief of



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Found: A Lake in Death Valley, the Hottest and Driest of the U.S. National Parks

This wasn't the first time this has happened, but typically, these bodies of water are merely very shallow ponds. Patrick Taylor, the chief of education and interpretation at the park, told *SFGate* that this was the largest lake he had seen near that location in six years.

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Luckily, the phenomenon was caught on camera by the photographer Elliot McGucken. *SFGate* reports that McGucken was in the area to take pictures at the Badwater Basin. However, road closures due to the heavy rains blocked the path. That's when McGucken happened upon the lake and there was no need to look for further photographic inspiration.

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NEWS000193

Found: A Lake in Death Valley, the Hottest and Driest of the U.S. National Parks

The results are these dazzling photos, which capture a natural wonder that would've remained hidden if not for a photographer and his camera. 📷


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Photographer driving through Death Valley captures rare and breathtaking 10-mile-long lake



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Stunning landscape images show a 10-mile-long lake that formed after rare torrential downpours in Death Valley, California, which is one of North America's hottest and driest locations.


A huge lake formed in near Salt Creek last week after a storm packed with tropical moisture affected Southern California, triggering flooding on several park roads last March.

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Photographer Elliott McGucken was in Death Valley to photograph the storm and its aftermath on March 7, when he happened upon the temporary lake and began to take images of it.

Stunning images show a 10-mile-long lake, (pictured), that formed after torrential downpours last March in Death Valley, California, which is one of North America's hottest and driest locations



© Elliott McGucken (EPPIC Fine Art)

A huge lake has formed in near Salt Creek last week after a storm packed with tropical moisture affected Southern California, triggering flooding on several roads within the grounds of the national park

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And the stunning series of otherworldly images have been picked up by several news outlets at home and abroad and have been widely shared on social media, with hundreds of users commencing on them since they were first published in March.

McGucken was planning to visit Badwater Basin to take some photos after the storm had passed through the area. However he could not reach that lake because the other, larger lake along Salt Creek blocked the way.


The National Park Service estimates that the picturesque lake, which has not yet been given a name, stretches about 10 miles.

"It's a surreal feeling seeing so much water in the world's driest place," McGucken, who also writes books on physics told the San Francisco Gate.



© Elliott McGucken © EPC Fine Art

Photographer Elliott McGucken was in Death Valley to photograph the storm and its aftermath on March 7, when he took images of the temporary lake



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McGucken was hoping to photograph Badwater Basin where he thought water might have also accumulated, but he couldn't access the area due to flooding and stumbled upon the ethereal lake

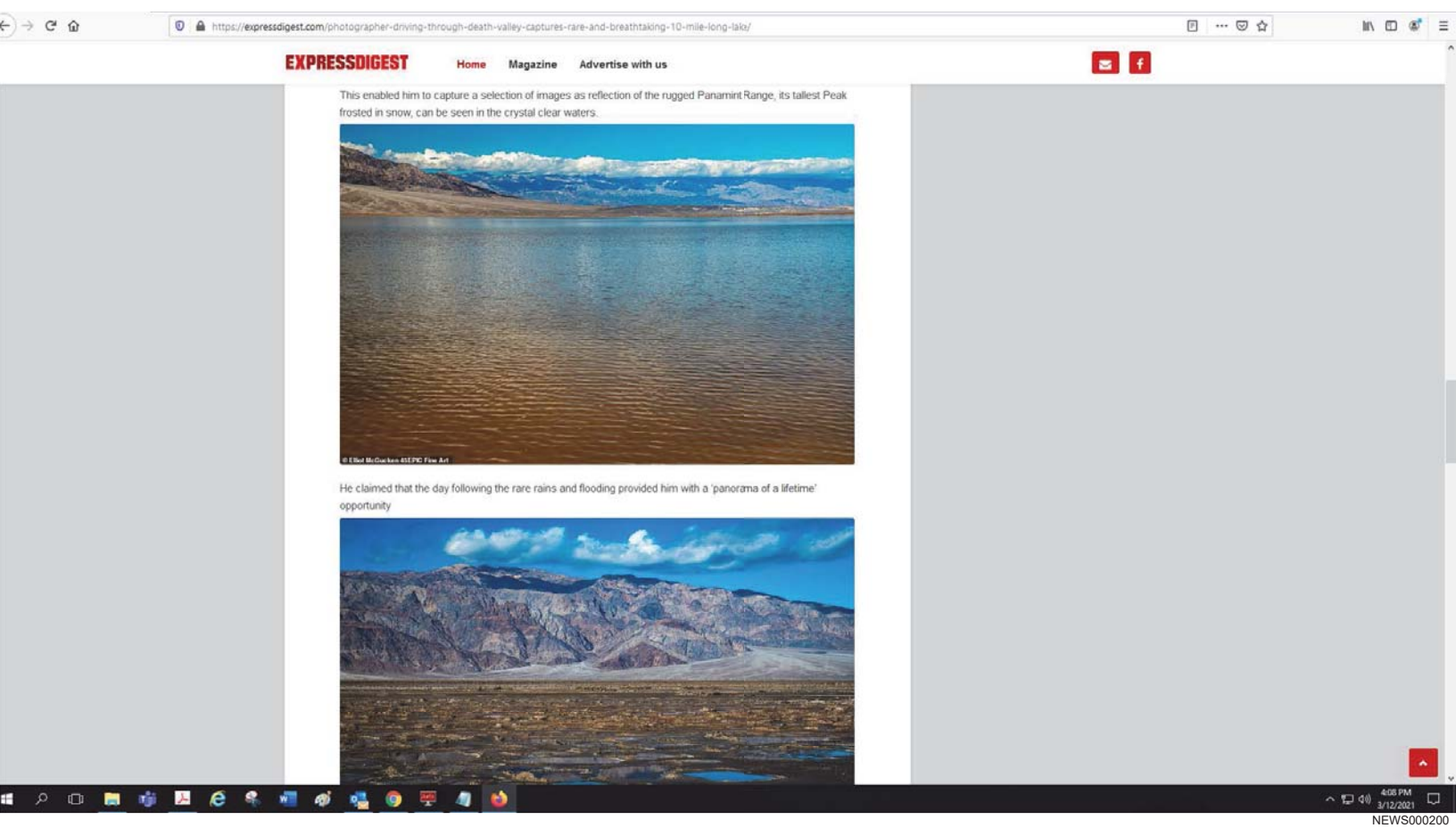
'There's an irony even though I couldn't get down to Badwater Basin. Overall, I think these shots are probably more unique.'

McGucken said Death Valley is usually windy blustery conditions were creating ripples on the water when he first happened upon the lake. 'Then, the wind died down and it got really calm,' he said.

This enabled him to capture a selection of images as reflection of the rugged Panamint Range, its tallest Peak frosted in snow, can be seen in the crystal clear waters.




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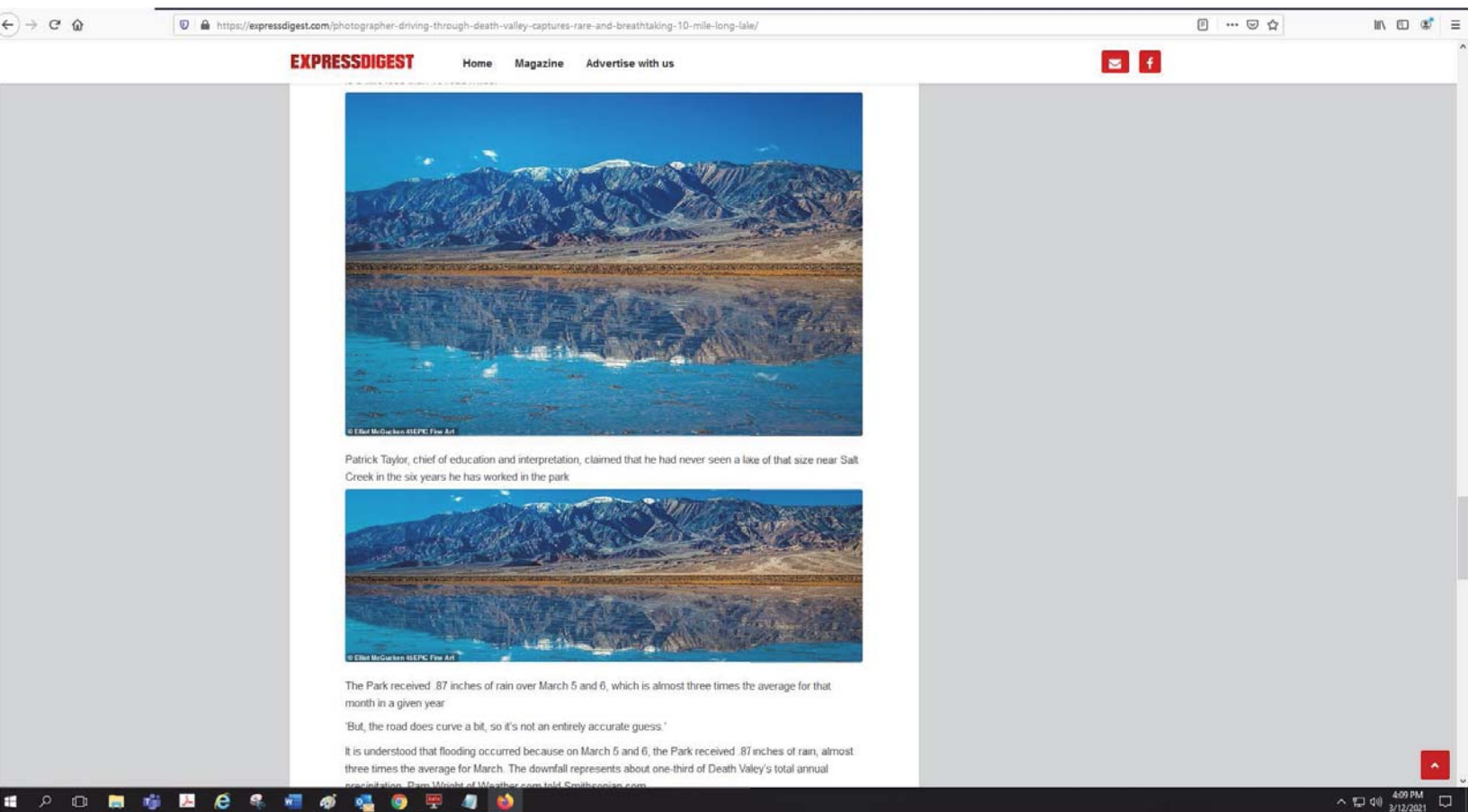
In composing the photograph, McGucken set the horizon at the golden cut in the height of the panorama and used a golden ratio in the composition, which is a classical technique in art oft referred to as the 'divine proportion'

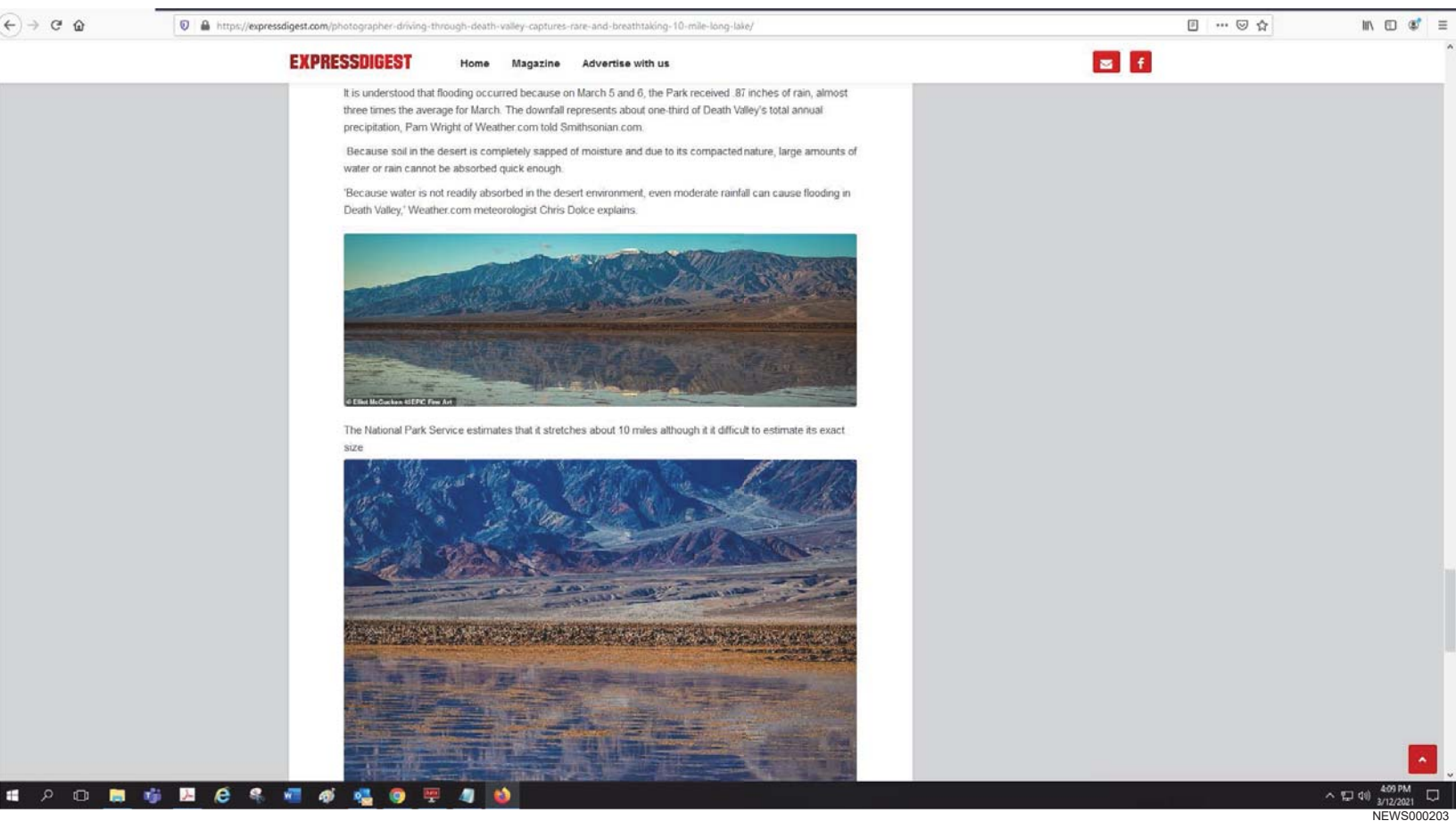
'Nature presents this ephemeral beauty, and I think a lot of what photography is about is searching for it and then capturing it,' he said.

The exact length of the lake is unknown, but the park emailed a statement to McGucken estimating it's about 10 miles long.

The park said in an email: 'I believe we would need aerial photos to accurately determine the size. From the road, it looks like it stretched from approximately Harmony Borax Works to Salt Creek right after the rain, which is a little less than 10 road miles.'








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© Elliot McCracken BEPC Fine Art

The shallow lake was discovered by photographer Elliott McCracken on March 7 as he intended to picture a nearby beauty spot.

'Flash flooding can happen even where it is not raining. Normally dry creeks or arroyos can become flooded due to rainfall upstream.'

McCracken said of taking the images: 'I was not too surprised that it took a couple hours to hike to the water's edge, as the lake grew and grew, until it did indeed become quite vast. I had planned to visit and photograph Badwater Basin that day, but the flooding had closed the roads leading out that way.'

'In composing the photograph, I set the horizon at the golden cut in the height of the panorama, thusly using the golden ratio in the composition—a classical technique in art oft referred to as the 'divine proportion.'

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
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

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
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Social media [and blogs](#) were ablaze this week with photos of a so-called "lake" that formed in Death Valley National Park last week after another heavy rainstorm.

But a park spokeswoman said in reality, the "lake" is not actually a lake — it's more like a series of puddles.

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"It is exaggerated," spokeswoman Abby Wines said. "It is just a puddle, it is not continuous and it is shrinking fast."

"It is not a thing," she said.

The water pooled in the park after it rained about .84 inches in the valley on March 6. A similar thing happened when it rained about .44 inches on Feb. 14. [The state has been doused this winter with a series of storms.](#)

The puddles in Death Valley are between Furnace Creek and Salt Creek, Wines said.

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The scene can be beautiful if there is no wind to disrupt the surface of the water, she said, but that's rarely the case in the blustery valley.

There is still water on the valley floor and it appears to be slowly working its way south, toward Badwater, but it is evaporating, Wines said.

"That doesn't mean it isn't beautiful," she emphasized.

Photographer Elliott McGucken [told sfgate.com](https://www.sfgate.com) that he captured the big pool the day after the latest rain during a pause in the wind.

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Luckily it has been caught on camera by a photographer who was initially aiming for Badwater Basin, which famously dips 86 meters (282 feet) below sea level at its lowest point (the lowest in the Americas), where he thought flood water may have gathered. Instead, road closures due to the heavy rain allowed him to stumble across this lake instead.


"It's a surreal feeling seeing so much water in the world's driest place," Elliot McGucken told [SEGalis](#). "There's an irony even though I couldn't get down to Badwater Basin. Overall, I think these shots are probably more unique."

By Katy Evans
13 MAR 2019, 14:36

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Death Valley National Park holds the record for the [hottest air temperature ever recorded](#) on Earth - 56.7°C (134°F) - which occurred on July 10, 1913, at the aptly named Furnace Creek. It also holds the record for [hottest ground temperature](#), a sizzling 93.9°C (201°F) on July 15, 1972, and the record for [hottest month ever recorded](#) with an average day and night temperature of 42.3°C (108.1°F) for July 2018 (which broke its own record set the previous July). It has a yearly average rainfall of 6 centimeters (2.36 inches) a year, making it one of the driest places on Earth too.

It may take a rare set of circumstances, but it's not actually that surprising that bodies of water can form in a desert.

On average in March, Furnace Creek has 7.6 millimeters (0.3 inches) of rain. [Last week](#) it experienced 22 millimeters (0.87 inches) of rain in just 24 hours. The surrounding mountains recorded up to 38 millimeters (1.5 inches) of rain, which of course flows down into the desert. You don't even need a lot of rain for a lake to emerge. When the ground is as dry as a desert it doesn't easily absorb water, which means flash flooding can occur even when it's not actually raining in the valley.

"The desert soils are dry and compact," National Weather Service meteorologist Todd Lerico told SFGate. "It's like putting water on concrete."

It's not clear the exact size of the lake, but officials from the National Park Service emailed McGucken an estimate of 16 kilometers (10 miles) in length, just after the rains last week. The lake is still there, but it is [getting smaller](#).

Despite its name, Death Valley is not devoid of life. Bighorn sheep, coyotes, kangaroo rats, jackrabbits, and tortoises have all made the arid

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Despite its name, Death Valley is not devoid of life. Bighorn sheep, coyotes, kangaroo rats, jackrabbits, and tortoises have all made the arid land their home. Its unique landscape – a below sea level basin surrounded by mountains – means the tips of the peaks can experience snow while the landscape occasionally springs into vast fields of wildflowers, known as [super blooms](#).

If you're lucky, you can even spot a rainbow.

Death Valley National Park
about 2 years ago




Death Valley rainbows are a really special sight to see, especially this one that appeared during this morning's sunrise. Being the driest national park, at less than 2" of average rainfall per year, rain doesn't come often. Have you experienced rain in the park?

Though it can make the landscape look very dramatic, it can also make travel potentially dangerous. We are still experiencing rain in different parts of the park today, so please use caution while traveling and/or hiking. Remember, turn around, don't drown! (NPS/Hoerner)

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A 10-mile lake has appeared in the middle of the driest spot in the United States.

Death Valley in California, a portion of the northern Mojave Desert, is known for being one of the hottest places in the world - with temperatures frequently reaching over 43C (110F) during the summer months.


But recent heavy rains and flooding have resulted in the formation of a lake in the national park, captured in photos and uploaded to social media by [Elliot McGucken](#).

The photographer stumbled upon the rare phenomenon on March 7 after a storm had severely flooded the area.



While he was hoping to get a glimpse of water in the Badwater Basin, he found the lake instead.

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
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The lake, according to park officials, is estimated to be about 10 miles long - and the result of nearly one inch of rainfall.

According to [weather.com](#) meteorologist Chris Dolce, the 0.87 inches of rainfall that fell early in March made up about one-third of the area's annual average of 2.36 inches.

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"It is not a thing," she said.

The water pooled in the park after it rained about .84 inches in the valley on March 6. A similar thing happened when it rained about .44 inches on Feb. 14. [The state has been doused this winter with a series of storms.](#)

The puddles in Death Valley are between Furnace Creek and Salt Creek, Wines said.

The scene can be beautiful if there is no wind to disrupt the surface of the water, she said, but that's rarely the case in the blustery valley.

There is still water on the valley floor and it appears to be slowly working its way south, toward Badwater, but it is evaporating, Wines said.

"That doesn't mean it isn't beautiful," she emphasized.

Photographer Elliott McGucken [told sfgate.com](#) that he captured the big pool the day after the latest rain during a pause in the wind.

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Death Valley is not only the hottest place in the world, with temperatures that can reach 134 degrees Fahrenheit (57 degrees Celsius), but also the driest place in North America.

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Death Valley is a desert that has dry, compact soil which doesn't absorb water very well.
 (Image credit: Elliot McCucken Fine Art)

On average, Death Valley receives less than 2 inches (5 centimeters) of rain a year, according to the National Park Service. Typically, about 0.3 inches (0.76 cm)

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On average, Death Valley receives less than 2 inches (5 centimeters) of rain a year, according to the National Park Service. Typically, about 0.3 inches (0.76 cm) of that rainfall comes in March, but within a single day last week, 0.84 inches (2.13 cm) of rain fell in the park, according to SFGate.

This isn't much when compared with the rainfall in the rest of the country, or even the rain that this storm brought to other parts of Southern California. But unlike other areas, the desert has dry, compact soil that doesn't absorb water well, a National Weather Service meteorologist Todd Lericos told SFGate.

In the aftermath of the storm, California-based photographer Elliot McGucken captured just how bad California's famous desert is at absorbing water in his gorgeous images of the pop-up lake.




Editor's Note: This story was updated to correct the amount of rainfall that fell in Death Valley. It was 2.13 cm, not 213 cm.

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He was trying to get to Badwater Basin, where he thought there could be flooding, when he saw the giant lake.

"It's a surreal feeling seeing so much water in the world's driest place," McGucken told SF Gate. "There's an irony even though I couldn't get down to Badwater Basin. Overall, I think these shots are probably more unique."

He posted photos of the 16-kilometre-long (10-mile-long) temporary lake, with the Panamint Range in the background, on Instagram.

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(eliotmcgucken/Instagram)

You don't actually need that much water for a lake to emerge in this incredibly arid place.

"Because water is not readily absorbed in the desert environment, even moderate rainfall can cause flooding in Death Valley," weather.com meteorologist Chris Dolce explained. "Flash flooding can happen even where it is not raining. Normally dry creeks or arroyos can become flooded due to

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"Because water is not readily absorbed in the desert environment, even moderate rainfall can cause flooding in Death Valley," weather.com meteorologist Chris Dolce explained. "Flash flooding can happen even where it is not raining. Normally dry creeks or arroyos can become flooded due to rainfall upstream."

Death Valley is located in Eastern California; during summertime, it can be one of the hottest places in the whole world.


Back in 1972, it clocked the highest natural ground surface temperature on Earth, with a blistering 93.9 degrees Celsius (201 degrees Fahrenheit). And for the last two years, it's the place where we've marked the hottest month ever measured on the planet.




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It is also the driest place in all of North America. On a regular year, Death Valley will only receive about two inches (60 mm) of rain.

But there are some pretty amazing sights to be enjoyed when the rains do show up.



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Wildflowers blossoming in Death Valley in 2005. (Chuck Abbe/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 2.0)

According to weather.com, Death Valley's rainfall on March 5th and 6th was 0.87 inches – nearly triple its whole March rainfall average.

"Rare rainstorms bring vast fields of wildflowers. Lush oases harbour tiny fish and refuge for wildlife and humans," the National Park Service explains.

"Despite its morbid name, a great diversity of life survives in Death Valley."

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Rare 10-mile-long lake forms in Death Valley after heavy rains and flooding

By Amy Graff, SFGATE Updated 1:42 pm PDT, Tuesday, March 12, 2019



Photo: Elliot McGucken's 45Epic Fine Art Landscape Photography

IMAGE 16 OF 30

After a wet winter storm swept Death Valley National Park, a lake formed near Salt Creek. LA-based photographer Elliot McGucken captured photos of the water on March 7, 2019.

It's not a sight you expect to see in the driest spot in the country.

A massive lake formed in **Death Valley National Park** near Salt Creek last week after a storm packed with tropical moisture **drenched** Southern California, triggering flooding on several park roads.**FROM THE WEB**

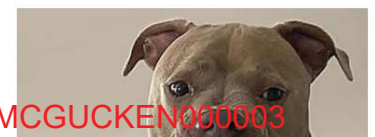
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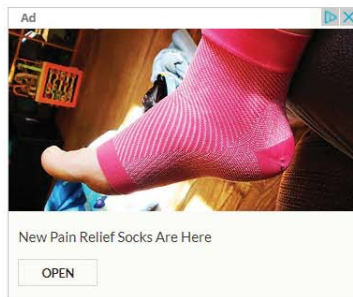
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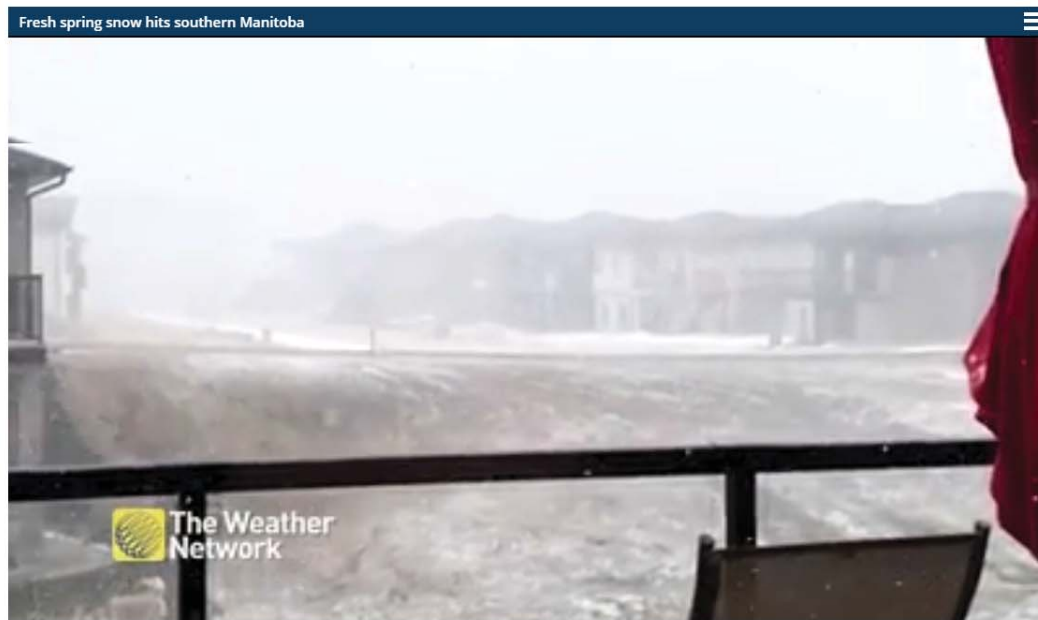


MCGUCKEN000003

Photographer Elliott McGucken was in Death Valley to photograph the storm and its aftermath; on March 7, he took images of the temporary, nameless lake.



McGucken was hoping to photograph Badwater Basin where he thought water might have also collected, but he couldn't access the area due to flooding and stumbled upon the lake.



"It's a surreal feeling seeing so much water in the world's driest place," said McGucken, who also writes books on physics. "There's an irony even though I couldn't get down to Badwater Basin. Overall, I think these shots are probably more unique."

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McGucken said Death Valley is usually windy, and when he first arrived at the lake, blustery conditions were creating ripples on the water. "Then, the wind died down and it got really calm," he said.

The result was a collection of images with the rugged Panamint Range, its tallest Telescope Peak frosted in snow, reflected in glassy waters.

"Nature presents this ephemeral beauty, and I think a lot of what photography is about is searching for it and then capturing it," he said.

The exact length of the lake is unknown, but the park emailed a statement to McGucken estimating it's about 10 miles long: "I believe we would need aerial photos to accurately determine the size. From the road, it looks like it stretched from approximately Harmony Borax Works to Salt Creek right after the rain, which is a little less than 10 road miles. But, the road does curve a bit, so it's not an entirely accurate guess."

As of Tuesday, the park said the lake was still there but getting smaller.



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Patrick Taylor, chief of education and interpretation, says he's never seen a lake of this size near Salt Creek in this six years he has worked in the park.

"It has formed before in smaller ponds, but I don't remember seeing it this large in this location before," Taylor said.

ALSO: Death Valley flooded by drenching rains: 'It's like putting water on concrete'

In a typical March, the Furnace Creek rain gauge in Death Valley records 0.3 inches of rainfall. In a 24-hour span running from last Tuesday to Wednesday, the same gauge measured 0.84 inches. In the surrounding mountains, the National Weather Service estimates 1 to 1.5 inches fell.

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This might not sound like a lot of rain, but NWS meteorologist Todd Lericos explains the desert landscape doesn't easily absorb water. Rain in the mountains rushes down to the valley floor.

"The desert soils are dry and compact," said Lericos, who works in the NWS Las Vegas office. "It's like putting water on concrete."

This story was updated on March 12 at 1:30 p.m.

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It's not a mirage! Photographer driving through Death Valley - America's hottest and driest place - captures ten-mile-long LAKE formed after rare heavy rainfall

- A collection of stunning images show a 10-mile-long lake that formed after rare torrential rain in Death Valley
- Photographer Elliott McGucken was in the area to photograph the storm and its aftermath last March when he stumbled upon the temporary shallow lake, providing him with a 'panorama of a lifetime'
- The exact length of the lake is unknown, but officials estimated it to be about around 10 miles with blue water
- Death Valley National Park received more than three times its average level of rainfall in March

By LEAH MCDONALD FOR DAILYMAIL.COM
PUBLISHED: 22:18 EST, 16 May 2019 | UPDATED: 00:15 EST, 17 May 2019

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Stunning landscape images show a 10-mile-long lake that formed after rare torrential downpours in Death Valley, **California**, which is one of North America's hottest and driest locations.

A huge lake formed near Salt Creek last week after a storm packed with tropical moisture affected Southern California, triggering flooding on several park roads last March.

Photographer Elliott McGucken was in Death Valley to photograph the storm and its aftermath on March 7, when he happened upon the temporary lake and started shooting.



© Elliot McGucken 4SEPIC Fine Art

Stunning images show a 10-mile-long lake, (pictured), that formed after torrential downpours last March in Death Valley, California, which is one of North America's hottest and driest locations

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A huge lake has formed in near Salt Creek last week after a storm packed with tropical moisture affected Southern California, triggering flooding on several roads within the grounds of the national park

And the stunning series of otherworldly images have been picked up by several news outlets at home and abroad and have been widely shared on social media, with hundreds of users commenting on them since they were first published in March.



McGucken was planning to visit Badwater Basin to take some photos after a storm had passed through. However, he could not reach the Basin because of this other, larger lake along Salt Creek.

The National Park Service estimates that the picturesque lake, which has not yet been given a name, stretches some 10 miles.

'It's a surreal feeling seeing so much water in the world's driest place,' McGucken, who also writes books on physics told the [San Francisco Gate](#).

Rare flood makes 10 mile long lake in the Death Valley

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Photographer Elliott McGucken was in Death Valley to photograph the storm and its aftermath on March 7, when he took images of the temporary lake



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McGucken was hoping to photograph Badwater Basin where he thought water might have also accumulated, but he couldn't access the area due to flooding and stumbled upon the ethereal lake

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'There's an irony even though I couldn't get down to Badwater Basin. Overall, I think these shots are probably more unique.'

McGucken said Death Valley is usually windy blustery conditions were creating ripples on the water when he first happened upon the lake. 'Then, the wind died down and it got really calm,' he said.

This enabled him to capture a selection of images as reflection of the rugged Panamint Range, its tallest Peak frosted in snow, can be seen in the crystal clear waters.



MCGUCKEN000033



© Elliot McGucken 4SEPIC Fine Art

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He claimed that the day following the rare rains and flooding provided him with a 'panorama of a lifetime' opportunity



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In composing the photograph, McGucken set the horizon at the golden cut in the height of the panorama and used a golden ratio in the composition, which is a classical technique in art oft referred to as the 'divine proportion'

'Nature presents this ephemeral beauty, and I think a lot of what photography is about is searching for it and then capturing it,' he said.

On the lake's size, the park said in an email: 'I believe we would need aerial photos to accurately determine the size. From the road, it looks like it stretched from approximately Harmony Borax Works to Salt Creek right after the rain, which is a little less than 10 road miles.



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Patrick Taylor, chief of education and interpretation, claimed that he had never seen a lake of that size near Salt Creek in the six years he has worked in the park



MCGUCKEN000034



The Park received .87 inches of rain over March 5 and 6, which is almost three times the average for that month in a given year

'But, the road does curve a bit, so it's not an entirely accurate guess.'

It is understood that flooding occurred because on March 5 and 6, the Park received .87 inches of rain, almost three times the average for March. The downfall represents about one-third of Death Valley's total annual precipitation, Pam Wright of Weather.com told [Smithsonian.com](#).

Because soil in the desert is completely sapped of moisture and due to its compacted nature, large amounts of water or rain cannot be absorbed quick enough.

'Because water is not readily absorbed in the desert environment, even moderate rainfall can cause flooding in Death Valley,' Weather.com meteorologist Chris Dolce explains.



The National Park Service estimates that it stretches about 10 miles although it is difficult to estimate its exact size



The shallow lake was discovered by photographer Elliott McGucken on March 7 as he intended to picture a nearby beauty spot

'Flash flooding can happen even where it is not raining. Normally dry creeks or arroyos can become flooded due to rainfall upstream.'

McGucken said of taking the images: 'I was not too surprised that it took a couple hours to hike to the water's edge, as the lake grew and grew, until it did indeed become quite vast. I had planned to visit and photograph Badwater Basin that day, but the flooding had closed the roads leading out that way.'

'In composing the photograph, I set the horizon at the golden cut in the height of the panorama, thusly using the golden ratio in the composition--a classical technique in art oft referred to as the 'divine proportion.'

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[Rare 10-mile-long lake forms in Death Valley after heavy rains and flooding - SFGate](#)
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Summer 2019

An Ethereal Whatchamacallit

By Rona Marech

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Summer 2019: An Ethereal Whatchamacallit


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What exactly was that 10-mile-long body of water in the desert?

"It was just such a lucky shot," said L.A.-based photographer Elliot McGucken. He was in Death Valley National Park in March when he stumbled across a 10-mile-long body of water that materialized after around 0.84 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour span. When the wind died down, McGucken snapped the panoramic photo above, capturing the mountains reflected in the still water. "You forget all the technical details and science when you're out there, and you just go for the ethereal quality," he said.


[Click to enlarge](#)

To McGucken's delight, his images ricocheted around social media, and numerous media outlets picked up the story. Not everyone was quite so impressed. Park spokeswoman Abby Wines dismissed #deathvalleylake as a puddle — or maybe a skim of water.

"There really isn't a word for what it is," she said. Plus, she pointed out, the event wasn't as rare as the stories breathlessly reported. Water had collected in the same spot earlier in the winter, and the rainfall didn't break any records.

But lake or glorified puddle, even Wines had to admit the nameless body had its merits: "It was beautiful," she said.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rona Marech
Editor-in-Chief

A longtime journalist, Rona Marech joined NPCA in 2013. She is the editor-in-chief of National Parks magazine.

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Photos of Death Valley Flooded with a 10-Mile Lake

MAR 16, 2019

ELLIOT MCGUCKEN

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I was out in Death Valley last week and was fortunate to photograph some unique scenes of the floods. A rare 10-mile-long lake formed in Death Valley after heavy rains.

From the road, one can see water, but due to the general vastness of Death Valley and the scale of the mountains and all, the body of water looks relatively small from the road even though it spans around 10 miles or so.



It was breathtaking, though! In between shooting photographs, we always steal a few seconds for ourselves and take some deep breaths out there, allowing the scene to wash over us in all its ephemeral beauty. And then we get back to taking photos, striving to make the fleeting beauty eternal, knowing that we can only ever fall short.



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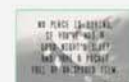
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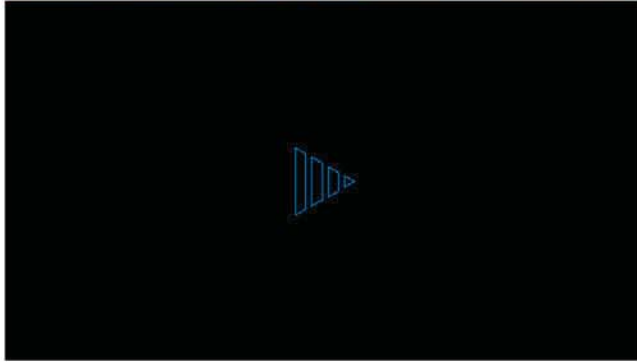
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It took me a lot longer to hike to the edge of the lake than I had originally estimated, as again, things are often far larger and distances greater than they at first appear in Death Valley due to the vast expanses and scales we are not normally used to. Even a lake spanning ten miles can appear rather small and close. But try hiking to its edge and you will find it to be far away and vast.

About the author: Dr. Elliot McGucken is a fine art landscape and seascape photographer. The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author. You can find more of McGucken's work on his [website](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).



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Flooding Creates a 10-Mile-Long Lake in Death Valley

The rare ephemeral lake was caused when the compacted, dry desert soil wasn't able to absorb the .87 inches of rain that recently fell on the national park



(Elliot McGucken, www.mcgucken.com)

By Jason Daley
SMITHSONIANMAG.COM
MARCH 13, 2019



Most of the time, visitors to Death Valley National Park in southern California don't expect to see much water. The area is the **hottest and driest spot** in North America. So it was surprising when, after a massive storm last week, a winding 10-mile-long lake appeared in the park.

The shallow body of water was discovered by photographer Elliott McGucken on March 7, reports Amy Graff at SFGate.com. After the storm moved through the area, McGucken was planning to visit Badwater Basin to take some photos, hoping that an ephemeral lake had formed in the area. But he couldn't reach the spot because the other, larger lake along Salt Creek blocked the way.

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CALLED PETER RINDISBACHER.

It actually turned out to be even better than Badwater Basin. McGucken was able to shoot some [once-in-a-lifetime images](#) of the flooding with the surrounding Panamint Mountains reflected in the water. "Nature presents this ephemeral beauty, and I think a lot of what photography is about is searching for it and then capturing it," he tells Graff.

While it's difficult to pin down just how large the lake is, the National Park Service estimates that it stretches about 10 miles. "I believe we would need aerial photos to accurately determine the size. From the road, it looks like it stretched from approximately Harmony Borax Works to Salt Creek right after the rain, which is a little less than 10 road miles," the park said in a statement emailed to McGucken. "But, the road does curve a bit, so it's not an entirely accurate guess."

According to Pam Wright at [Weather.com](#), the flooding occurred because on March 5 and 6, the Park received .87 inches of rain, almost three times the average for March. The deluge represents about one-third of Death Valley's total annual precipitation.

The parched, compacted soil of the desert can be like concrete, and is unable to suck up such a large amount of rain quickly. "Because water is not readily absorbed in the desert environment, even moderate rainfall can cause flooding in Death Valley," [Weather.com](#) meteorologist Chris Dolce explains. "Flash flooding can happen even where it is not raining. Normally dry creeks or arroyos can become flooded due to rainfall upstream."

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Park officials tell Graff the lake is still present, though it is gradually getting smaller.



(Elliot McGucken, [www.mcgucken.com](#))

Sadly, the rains have come too late to power a [superbloom in Death Valley](#), reports the NPS. Superblooms occur when the desert gets above average rainfall at the right time in the winter months, leading to an irruption of desert flowers. Currently, a superbloom, the second in two years, is [taking place in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#), the state's largest, which received the right amount of rain early on. Fields of orange poppies, purple sand verbena, white and yellow primroses and other desert wildflowers are blossoming in unison.

Death Valley experienced a major superbloom in 2005 and its latest [superbloom was in 2016](#). Those flowers, however, came with a price. In October 2015, the park experienced the [largest flood event in the Valley's recorded history](#) when between 1 to 2 inches of rain fell over the park. At that time, Badwater Basin, normally a dry lake bed, filled with water. The road to the Scotty's Castle area of the park was closed, and it is still [not expected to reopen until 2020](#).

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Jason Daley is a Madison, Wisconsin-based writer specializing in natural history, science, travel, and the environment. His work has appeared in *Discover*, *Popular Science*, *Outside*, *Men's Journal*, and other magazines.

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